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Lessons Learned from Implementing a Culturally Responsive, Trauma-Informed Training Series

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigated educators' perceptions and experiences of a culturally responsive, trauma-informed training series with teachers from three elementary schools. An inductive thematic analysis was employed to examine qualitative data from post-workshop surveys. The findings underscore three main themes: presentation delivery, white fragility, and solutions-focused mindset. Themes were integrated into lessons learned, which highlighted the importance of assessing educators' readiness for training, bridging the gap between theory and practice, presenting workshops in alignment with trauma-informed, culturally responsive principles, and acknowledging the non-linear nature of the journey toward culturally responsive, trauma-informed practice. These insights inform recommendations for future professional development efforts, emphasizing the need for ongoing collaboration, reflection, and adaptation to cultivate inclusive, equitable learning environments.

Keywords: culturally responsive practice, trauma-informed care, professional development, educators, inductive thematic analysis

Trauma-informed schools are popular for their potential to address and prevent childhood trauma. These schools, varying in their implementation, advocate for practices that recognize the impact of trauma on students' learning and behavior, both at the classroom and systemic levels. Amid national discussions about the pervasive impact of social, economic, and cultural inequities on traumatic experiences, scholars

have advocated for the integration of cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed care in school settings (Alvarez et al., 2016). Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) acknowledges the socio-political-historical contexts of students and how they intersect with experiences of trauma, thereby emphasizing the need to address cultural factors in trauma-informed practice (Blitz et al., 2016). Despite the calls for integrating CRP with trauma-informed practice, limited studies exist to examine this in practice. Contributing to this stream of literature, the current study describes the experiences of teachers who participated in culturally responsive training series embedded within a trauma-informed school program. I contend that this information can shed light on the important yet complex work of CRP interventions and aid in developing overall trauma-informed school interventions.

Expanding Conversations on Childhood Trauma

Felitti and colleagues (1998) expanded the scope of trauma from war veterans' experiences (Thomas et al., 2019) to everyday interpersonal forms of toxic stress influenced by adverse childhood experiences, such as abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, and sexual) and neglect (i.e., physical and emotional). These experiences can impair students' learning and behavior within schools (Cohen et al., 2006; Cook et al., 2003; Record-Lemon & Buchanan, 2017), making trauma an important topic for prevention and intervention within the school setting. Subsequent research expanded the conversation to include historical trauma, which has predominantly focused on Native American populations but has also been expanded to include Black and Latinx populations (Estrada, 2009; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017).

Historical trauma in this context is the cumulative psychological and structural impairment over a lifespan and across generations of a group's experiences of oppression (Brown, 2008; Hanna et al., 2016). Later generational victims of historical trauma are often susceptible to generational poverty, race-based health disparities, negative self-schema, and further racial-ethnic oppression that extends to the present day (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). These inequities and oppressive experiences extend to school settings in the present day where Black and Latinx children face racial violence and trauma as they navigate a white-dominant system (Alvarez et al., 2016). This suggests that trauma prevention and intervention strategies should center on race and racism to ensure that they meet the needs of racially minoritized students (Joseph et al., 2020). While scholars have called for an expanded conceptualization of adverse childhood experiences that includes perceptions of racism (Cronholm et al., 2015), there is limited documented use of this approach in school settings.

Trauma-Informed Schools

As research in childhood trauma expands beyond public health into disciplines like education and psychology, schools have emerged as crucial settings for delivering socioemotional services to prevent and mitigate the effects of traumatic experiences. Trauma-informed schools recognize the profound impacts trauma can have on students' learning, behavior, and well-being (Chafouleas et al., 2016). At the

universal (Tier 1) level, trauma-informed practice encompasses activities such as fostering positive student-teacher relationships, creating safe environments, implementing effective behavior management systems, and screening for trauma-related internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Berger, 2019; Ching & Berger, 2023; Morton, 2022). At the targeted (Tier 2) and intensive (Tier 3) levels, trauma-informed practices involve deploying evidence-based, trauma-specific interventions, conducting broad-based socioemotional skills groups, and establishing trauma-informed crisis response protocols (Thomas et al., 2019). Research on trauma-informed schools has yielded positive outcomes, including increased teacher efficacy in trauma-informed care, positive student-teacher relationships, and improved student well-being (Herenkohl et al., 2019; Wilson-Ching & Berger, 2024).

While trauma-informed practices are lauded for their effectiveness, limited research has emphasized considering students' cultural contexts when implementing these approaches. This is particularly significant considering the growing emphasis on culturally responsive practices within trauma-informed literature (Blitz et al., 2016; Garza et al., 2019; Haynes et al., 2023; Thomas et al., 2019). It is crucial to recognize that current trauma-informed practices may not adequately address the needs of students whose manifested symptoms are the result of oppression and racial injustices (Curry, 2010). Moreover, adopting Eurocentric approaches to trauma-informed care may inadvertently marginalize and harm students from racially minoritized backgrounds. For example, research has shown that teachers often lower their academic expectations for Black and Latinx children (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007) under the assumption of alleviating stress responses to be trauma-informed in their approach. While well-intentioned, this practice can diminish students' self-efficacy and limit their opportunities for independent learning (Hammond, 2014).

Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma-Informed Practice

CRP in education refers to the recognition and validation of students' diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities within the learning environment (Gay, 2010). It involves understanding the socio-cultural contexts in which students live and learn, and actively incorporating this knowledge into practices, curriculum design, and the overall environment. When integrated into trauma-informed practice, cultural responsiveness enhances the effectiveness and inclusiveness of interventions by ensuring that they are relevant, respectful, and meaningful to students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Alvarez, 2020). By incorporating culturally responsive strategies into trauma-informed care, educators can create safe and supportive learning environments where students feel understood, valued, and empowered to engage in their healing and learning journey. Moreover, cultural responsiveness helps to address the unique needs and experiences of students who have experienced trauma within the context of their cultural and racial identities, thereby promoting equity, resilience, and positive socioemotional outcomes for all students. Overall, although CRP and trauma-informed care can be thought of as separate frameworks from which educators can draw from and translate into practical skills, they can work together to fundamentally challenge the way educators work with students.

While more research is emerging to acknowledge the need for integrating CRP into trauma-informed care, limited implementation science exists to demonstrate practical applications of the two frameworks. Blitz and colleagues (2016) conducted a professional development series centered around cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed care, though findings indicated teachers felt that conversations on race belong in trauma discourse. Similarly, Blitz and colleagues (2020) found that teachers did not understand the role of racial oppression in students' adversity. These studies suggest the need for culturally responsive, trauma-informed professional development that helps educators gain race-conscious perspectives to better understand how race and trauma intersect and should be addressed together to implement trauma-informed practices that work for all students.

Current Study

Previous research suggests that educators in trauma-informed schools should strive to understand the complex associations between racism, trauma, and adversity, warranting the need for trauma-informed programming to include CRP professional development. The current study describes the experiences of teachers who participated in culturally responsive, trauma-informed training. The teachers in this study were all educators in schools that had received training and coaching in trauma-informed practices. Through qualitative feedback with intervention participants throughout the training, we identified key program components and considerations to attend to that can improve culturally responsive, trauma-informed training for educators.

METHODS

This project took place as part of a school-university partnership. The participating university hosted a state-wide trauma-informed school initiative that trained and supported elementary school educators in understanding the stress response system and supporting wellness and resilience for all students. Implementation with partner schools included: (a) training for all school staff on trauma and the effects of adverse childhood experiences; (b) creation and convening of a school-specific Resilience Team (6 to 10 school leaders and staff) that met regularly to shape and lead the initiative; (c) facilitation of tailored school- and classroom-wide trauma-informed strategies; and (d) ongoing coaching to support successful implementation of all project components (Rosanbalm, 2020). Schools were offered the chance to receive a supplemental culturally responsive, trauma-informed training series. Importantly, the current study only focuses on the CRP component of the university initiative.

The three schools selected for the current study had already participated the overall trauma-informed initiative during the 2019-2020 school year and completed the CRP training in the following 2020-2021 school year. As such, participants had received foundational knowledge on trauma and its effects on students' learning and behavior and had begun implementing school-selected trauma-informed strategies, such as staff wellness initiatives, social-emotional learning curricula, and calm spaces

in each classroom. The culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, training was delivered virtually.

The workshop series consisted of three 2-hour online sessions via Zoom, as well as coaching sessions during the schools' Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. The first workshop served as an introduction to cultural responsiveness and intersections with trauma, and consisted of terminology discussions and steps needed to achieve change within education. The second workshop focused on historical trauma and how it manifests in the school setting. The purpose of the third workshop was to discuss developing cultural awareness and culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices. All three training workshops were conducted between January and March of 2021, when educators' instruction of students at the participating schools had returned to hybrid (some virtual and some in-person) formats. Each school also received one to two monthly supportive consultation sessions by trauma-informed program coaches to support their implementation of culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices.

It is essential to provide clarity on the positionality of the author and the involvement of key stakeholders in the intervention described. The author is an early career school psychologist with an interest and expertise in examining the prerequisites—such as school racial climate and professional development—necessary for school personnel to provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices. The author was an external evaluator and was not directly engaged in the implementation of the training series. The program coordinators and coaches were trained consultants and university faculty members that were not affiliated with the participating districts. Their expertise encompassed school mental health, particularly trauma-informed schools.

Participants

Three Title I elementary schools from two school districts in a southeastern state in the United States participated in the CRP training. All three schools were small, serving 300-450 students in the 2019-2020 school year. Public records indicated that the schools received a grade of D or F on their 2019-2020 school report cards. Additionally, most students in each school were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The racial and ethnic demographics of the community surrounding each school district were as follows: In District 1, 47% were White, 35% were Black, 15% were Hispanic/Latinx, and the remaining 3% identified as another race/ethnicity. In District 2, 54% were White, 34% were Black, 6% were Hispanic/Latinx, and the remaining 6% identified as another race/ethnicity. The training workshops consisted of varying numbers of teachers and other school staff and leaders (first training workshop $n = 128$; second training workshop $n = 121$; third training workshop $n = 117$). Of the 78 participating teachers that filled out the initial information survey, 92% identified as female and 8% identified as male. Teachers' racial and ethnic backgrounds were as follows: 84% White, 13% Black, and .01% Hispanic. Teachers were invited to participate in qualitative surveys after each training session, with participation in these surveys varying across sessions (first training session $n = 42$; second training session $n = 45$; third training session $n = 39$).

Measures

Participants completed qualitative surveys with open-ended reflective and evaluative survey questions after each training workshop they attended. These questions gauged the perceptions of participants' experiences in each individual training session. They were delivered to participants via an anonymous Qualtrics survey. Questions included: "What do you consider to be today's most valuable experience or topic?" "What parts of this session were problematic or not helpful for you, if anything?" "What was useful in this session, if anything?" and "How can this particular workshop be strengthened?" It is important to note that these questions were used to evaluate the culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series and not the entire trauma-informed training program.

Data Analysis

The evaluative survey questions were used to describe the experiences of training participants in the workshop series. The research team employed an inductive thematic analysis approach to identify, analyze, and report themes within the data in a way that does not try to fit data into a pre-existing code or theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Inductive thematic analysis is data-driven and exploratory in that the teachers' answers provided themes for improving the intervention rather than themes being generated in advance of reviewing the data based on specific aspects of the intervention. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) six steps for conducting thematic analyses: (1) familiarizing yourself with your data, (2) generating initial codes in a systematic fashion, (3) collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each theme, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

Data from the workshop surveys' evaluative and reflective questions were examined first using Dedoose (2021). Initial codes were assigned and the process continued for each interview category. Analyst triangulation, or using multiple researchers to review findings, was used to reduce researcher bias. Four research assistants were recruited and trained to participate in the coding process. The research assistants met with the author once a week for 2.5 months to discuss coding for all the data. Coding disagreements were discussed as a team to determine a consensus for the final codes. The team then met to organize the final codes into themes. The author then presented the themes to the trauma-informed program coordinators for feedback. The program coordinators agreed with the themes generated by the research team.

FINDINGS

Three themes regarding the evaluation of the training workshops were identified: (a) presentation delivery; (b) white fragility; and (c) solution-focused mindset. Presentation delivery referred to the educators' sentiments toward the content of the workshop series as well as how it was delivered. The white fragility theme reflects how some participants described strong negative feelings of guilt and defensiveness.

Other participant responses revealed that educators came to the training with a solutions-focused mindset that may have hindered their readiness to engage race-related historical factors that impact educational spaces. Educators expressed strong feelings toward the workshop—both positive and negative—and these sentiments may have influenced what they were able to grasp from the series. Each theme is described below, with examples provided from participants' workshop survey responses.

Presentation Delivery

Within the presentation delivery theme, teachers talked about three topics in particular—clarity in key terms, connecting history to present day, and the overwhelming nature of the workshop series. Regarding key terms, participants enjoyed being provided clarity for equity-related definitions. For example, when asked what they enjoyed about the workshop, one participant replied, "Providing clear definitions on terms that are often thrown around but not defined and discussed—prejudice vs. discrimination vs. oppression." Another participant replied, "Learning a common definition for racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression (among other terminology covered)."

Some of the educators also enjoyed learning about history. Participants highlighted the way the workshop presenters connected history to present day circumstances. One educator explained the importance of doing so: "I think it is vital to have these discussions because so many people aren't aware of the links from our history to present-day inequity." Another educator acknowledged the impact of history on their classroom:

Historical trauma and how it is cyclical and affects our children of today. I can now understand some of the parents that I have dealt with in the past. I can see that many of them may have been suffering from [historical trauma] . . . the distrust they had in me, a white[1] person.

Participants noted several ways they enjoyed building the connection between history and present-day inequity, such as through videos and images. One teacher connected through facts: "Hearing about all the percentages of Black males such as 52% as compared to 78% of white boys graduating from high school [was meaningful]."

Participants also described the overwhelming nature of the workshop series. Educators were overwhelmed for a number of reasons, including the heaviness of the information and the length of the workshops. As one participant put it, "[Need] shorter sessions to allow time for better digestion of the hard to swallow information." Another participant described the overwhelming nature of the amount of people in the audience and unfamiliarity with them, saying, "I think it would have been difficult if it were just with my school with people I know . . . it was very difficult to open up

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[1] The capitalization of the term White in direct participant quotes reflects the original formatting used by participants in their responses.

with so many people I did not know." Overall, participants were in favor of learning about history when it was directly connected to their classroom experiences; however, the density of the information made it overwhelming.

White Fragility

Of note, several educators described sentiments related to white fragility. It is unclear whether most responses under this theme were due to participants' experiences with the presenters, the content, the delivery of the content, or internal attitudes; however, many participants expressed feelings of defensiveness and guilt in relation to the workshop series. As one participant described,

It pretty much felt like 2.5 hours of Dear White People: You are the problem and are responsible for 400+ years of racism. You're also responsible for owning it, fixing it, and making up for it. Here's why.

Another educator expressed discomfort with the presenters, saying, "I felt as though the presenters were trying to make me think I owed someone repayment or some form of restitution for something I never had a part in." These participants described feelings of guilt, blame, and defensiveness that served as cognitive and emotional barriers to their readiness to engage with the training content and presenters.

Other participants may have felt as though the environment was not safe enough for them to discuss content out loud. For example, one educator expressed their fear of contributing to the discussion: "I felt defensive. Didn't want to comment for fear of people making the assumption I'm racist. Felt like I was being called a racist." Similarly, another educator recommended ensuring the safety of all participants and "making sure everyone feels comfortable in their racial skin," potentially referring to the uncomfortable feelings educators felt during the training. Finally, some educators responded with color-evasiveness (i.e., comments made by individuals that dismiss or downplay the significance of racism). A respondent replied, "I feel like being white is completely shameful even though I have experienced some different things that most white people have not. It's all about your background, not necessarily your race or color." Generally, many participants felt as though the training, especially the parts related to historical and racial trauma, were a personal attack, which resulted in defensiveness, guilt, and shame.

Solution-Focused Mindset

Despite many respondents expressing enjoyment in learning about history and connecting it to the present day, an overwhelming majority of participants wanted to move away from the history component of the workshop series and focus on practical solutions. Suggestions for improving the training included: "Give us actual things to do in our classroom," "Share things to use in the classroom more," and "More practical implications." Some educators seemed to contest the idea of learning about history. For example, one respondent reported, "Giving more ways for us to understand problematic behaviors and redirect them. Disruptive behavior is disruptive behavior regardless of the reason—what are some strategies that can be used to channel that behavior in a positive way?" When asked for recommendations

for the first and second workshops, educators identified wanting to learn about several specific strategies, including "How to better engage with families?" and "How do I strengthen my relationship with 5th grade students of color who are unmotivated about their education?"

After the third workshop, which included CRP and strategies, respondents indicated that learning about strategies was the most valuable experience in the training. In response to the reflective and evaluative questions that asked for positives for the training day, an educator responded, "The resources provided for talking to students openly about race and fairness, and the specific strategies to use for helping to involve families." Similarly, another educator enjoyed "the discussion regarding collective strategies for classroom behaviors and code switching." In addition to classroom takeaways, another educator enjoyed thinking about takeaways for the entire school: "Most relevant was truly thinking about how we can structure the school to foster interdependence." Overall, participants seemed to emphasize solutions and strategies for their classroom over background information and the fundamental principles that undergirded the classroom practices.

DISCUSSION

While cultural responsiveness holds promise for enhancing trauma-informed care in schools, there remains a critical need for more practical application research to fully realize its potential. This study explored educators' perceptions and experiences of a culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series. Broadly, the findings encapsulate educators' sentiments towards workshop content and delivery, feelings of defensiveness and discomfort regarding race-related discussions, and a yearning for practical implications and tangible strategies for integrating culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices into the classroom. These findings are synthesized into lessons learned to offer recommendations for future culturally responsive, trauma-informed professional development within school settings.

Lesson 1: Readiness for Training Can Play a Vital Role in Educators' Ability to Engage and Extract Meaning from Race-Focused Workshops

Trauma-informed training can be enhanced by engaging in learning about cultural responsiveness. However, culturally responsive training requires conversations on race and racism, and some teachers may be less ready to engage in those conversations. As such, the readiness of educators to engage with CRP training plays a pivotal role in their ability to effectively participate in discussions surrounding race, culture, and oppression—such as cultural responsiveness. This assertion aligns well with existing literature (Chung, 2013; Knox et al., 2023) emphasizing that well-intentioned diversity-related training may yield unfavorable outcomes if participants are not adequately prepared to embrace this new material. Implementing CRP training with all the teachers in a school assumes that all teachers are ready for the training, and that may not be the case. This whole-school training approach also assumes that school structures (e.g., administration or curriculum) will support and even encourage CRP.

In this study, educators' readiness for the CRP training was evident in teacher reports of their own discomfort and defensiveness with the training content. Educators in this study were specifically defensive of the race-related content of the training, as indicated by the white fragility theme (e.g., "It pretty much felt like 2.5 hours of Dear White People: You are the problem and are responsible for 400+ years of racism"). These qualitative data suggest that negative emotional and cognitive responses to race and racism limit the ability for teachers to engage with the difficult, yet necessary, historical roots and contemporary manifestations of racism and philosophy of CRP. Indeed, several studies note the challenges that educators have with diversity-related professional development and race talk in general (Crowley, 2019; Palmer & Louis, 2017). Understanding the background behind the purpose of CRP is important, as supported by other educators' descriptions of the program in the presentation delivery theme (e.g., "Historical trauma and how it is cyclical and affects our children of today"). At face value, educators may feel ready to engage in conversations about classroom practices that can help students of color; however, tougher conversations on race and racism, which are a part of CRP, may cause educators to disengage from culturally responsive, trauma-informed professional development opportunities.

Findings underscore the necessity of assessing and addressing individual educators' readiness for culturally responsive, trauma-informed training both before and during its implementation. Importantly, recognizing educators' readiness does not imply refraining from training altogether if readiness is lacking; rather, it entails acknowledging and proactively responding to educators' varying levels of preparedness during training delivery. Previous research highlights that readiness encompasses cognitive and affective dimensions and operates at both individual and school levels (Knox et al., 2023). Considering these dimensions may produce more positive experiences in training. Employing readiness screenings can provide valuable insights into educators' and schools' readiness levels, facilitating targeted support and guidance to enhance their journey toward culturally responsive, trauma-informed care. Additionally, facilitators should adeptly assess participants' readiness and collaborate with them to address any negative sentiments hindering engagement with workshop content. Normalizing feelings of distress and discomfort is crucial, with facilitators framing the content explicitly to foster reflection rather than assign blame. By adopting such approaches, facilitators can create a supportive environment conducive to meaningful engagement and growth.

Lesson 2: Implementing CRP Workshops Should Bridge the Gap Between Practical Implications and a Description of the Culturally Responsive Framework

Many of the participants requested take-home implications (e.g., "Share things to use in the classroom more") and step-by-step solutions, while demonstrating resistance to reflecting on the historical and racial trauma components. Because much of the CRP workshop series (sessions 1 and 2) did not focus on specific strategies and, rather, described the cultural responsiveness framework (Gay, 2010), participants may have felt as though they left the training without receiving what they

needed to implement a CRP approach in their classroom. However, CRP is not meant to be reduced to discrete steps and strategies (Sleeter, 2011, 2012). Reducing professional development to classroom practices may negate the complexity of cultural responsiveness. These findings suggest that educators must be prepared for critical and creative thinking to apply new knowledge about race and racism to reassess their own classroom practices.

Concurrently, researchers find that professional development for teachers should be relevant and applicable to their classrooms (Farris, 2017). Teachers frequently seek guidance in the form of practical solutions and step-by-step instructions, which can pose challenges for CRP facilitators given the abstract nature of CRP as a framework. This suggests the need to find a common ground for educators in which they can see the practicality of the workshop while also treating CRP as a broad framework to tailor strategies for their individual classrooms. This may include a more integrated approach where historical and academic discussions about race and racism are concurrent with practical tools and exemplars for teachers to discuss and interrogate. Doing so may help teachers to connect their knowledge of students' strengths and needs to change habits, behaviors, and dispositions (Warren, 2017).

CRP training may also consider approaches where educators work together to practice applying a culturally responsive, trauma-informed lens to their own existing practices and receive feedback from their peers and the workshop facilitators. Some scholars have found this approach to be useful when implemented over multiple course sessions and in multiple course formats (Oliver et al., 2021). Additionally, the current findings suggest that it will be helpful for facilitators to build connections between history and educators' current classrooms often to keep educators engaged. Teachers are often pressed for time, and while professional development is desired, it must be perceived as relevant for them to be motivated to invest in it (Hunzicker, 2011). Therefore, offering prompted discussions on how historical information aligns with current schooling practices in smaller groups can ensure that workshops remain relevant and impactful for educators. By integrating more practical strategies with the broader framework of CRP, culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshops can effectively support educators in implementing positive practices in the classroom.

Lesson 3: Facilitators Presenting Culturally Responsive, Trauma-Informed Workshops Should Present in a Way that Mimics the Very Practices They are Attempting to Teach

The findings present the reactions of educators involved in a culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series for educators. Educators expressed feeling overwhelmed by the number of participants in the workshops and the heavy content combined with little time for comprehension. These findings indicate that culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series should be implemented in a way that allows for manageable content and opportunities for reflection. Additionally, it is important to prepare teachers for the content they are being presented within culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshops. In this study, teachers were only provided with general topic areas. It could be that the teachers were not fully prepared to engage in deep conversations related to race and racism before implementation.

Providing teachers with pre-workshop reflection questions could help the teachers to prepare for the conversations and adjust expectations for receiving a predetermined set of classroom practices. Considering the varying levels of readiness among participants to engage in discussions about race and racism, facilitators need to adopt strategies that cater to these differences. One approach may be the occasional use of affinity groups or breakout rooms, which offer supportive environments conducive to deeper engagement and reflection. By grouping participants based on their understanding of race-related topics, facilitators can create spaces where individuals feel safe and empowered to share their perspectives openly, especially those who are racially minoritized. Similarly, this helps to mitigate racial fatigue, particularly among racially minoritized teachers who may experience heightened apprehension.

Lesson 4: Evaluating CRP Training Should Consider the Non-Linear Process of Becoming Culturally Responsive

Generally, participants noted the overwhelming nature of the content (e.g., "[Need] shorter sessions to allow time for better digestion of the hard to swallow information") and there was, indeed, a lot to reflect on. The experience of being overwhelmed may also explain their solution-focused mindset. Engaging with the troublesome history of racism in the United States is difficult to process and learned strategies are tangible and an outcome they can see at work in their classrooms. Classroom practices also offer an opportunity for performative allyship (i.e., engagement in actions or gestures that are superficial and without genuine commitment), while reflecting on racism may require reassessing and changing one's fundamental worldview.

In the qualitative data from the third workshop (which was focused on classroom practices) participants emphasized the need for solutions just as much as the first workshop, which was more academic and historical in content. This could mean it will take time for participants to move from wanting and needing tangible solutions to being ready to engage holistically in culturally responsive, trauma-informed practice. Keeping this in mind, schools implementing CRP workshops in the future should consider the potential non-linear growth in CRP. A culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop is likely not a one-time, one-size-fits-all solution to equity and justice in schools, and results following the end of a CRP training may vary as educators become ready to engage in deeper reflections and grapple with content that they may not have engaged with before. It will be important for schools to have support in place to continuously work with teachers on their journey to cultural responsiveness, such as long-term facilitators, coaches, engaging school psychologists, or partnering with school social workers (Cryer-Coupet et al., 2021).

Limitations

Despite the many offerings of this study, there were several limitations. It is important to note that this workshop series was implemented during the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and by the surge of the Black Lives Matter movement due to

police brutality. Such a context presented several challenges for implementation, including Zoom fatigue among the educators (Elbogen et al., 2022), which contributed to missing data due to decreased participant engagement and attendance. The research team received rough, yet authentic, data which we worked from to spark conversations with program coordinators regarding the implementation of culturally responsive, trauma-informed training in schools. While training implementation may have been beneficial to conduct during the pandemic to strengthen trauma-informed practices at a time many students were facing trauma and adversity, future research will need to examine the experiences of educators in culturally responsive, trauma-informed training outside of the context of a global pandemic. Similarly, we acknowledge that there may be additional considerations or experiences of culturally responsive, trauma-informed professional development training that were not captured by the data in this study.

Future research should look to use more intensive data collection, such as focus groups and individual interviews. Additionally, the current study did not examine the effectiveness of the culturally responsive, trauma-informed training, suggesting an area of need for future research. Future studies should use multiple data sources to accurately assess the effectiveness of CRP programming. Additionally, the reflective and evaluative workshop survey questions were anonymous; thus, we were not able to analyze data using the socio-cultural and racial-ethnic backgrounds of educators. Failure to collect data on participants' backgrounds may have implications for understanding the nuances of the themes identified in the study, particularly the theme of white fragility. Participants' identities likely influenced their perceptions and experiences of discussions on race-related topics, thus shaping their responses to the training. For instance, teachers from racially minoritized backgrounds may have had different patterns of emotional responses not consistent with white fragility. However, the current study was unable to capture this aspect. Moving forward, to comprehensively understand the experiences of educators within a culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series, the identities of participants must be linked to their responses.

CONCLUSION

The current study underscores the experiences of educators in a culturally responsive, trauma-informed workshop series. By exploring educators' perceptions and experiences in professional development, the study shed light on opportunities for advancing the experiences and effectiveness of such training. The lessons learned highlight the importance of assessing educators' readiness for training, bridging the gap between theory and practice, presenting workshops aligned with the principles they espouse, and acknowledging the non-linear nature of the journey toward culturally responsive, trauma-informed care in schools. Moving forward, it is essential to heed these lessons and continue refining professional development for educators to cultivate inclusive, equitable learning environments that support the holistic well-being of all students.

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